

Madison County Board of Commissioners

Commissioners

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COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

It's been a whirlwind ride in Madison County since the last time all of you heard from us in this format. We'll try to concentrate on some of the major highlights, long as they are, these last few months. We apologize for not keeping everyone in the loop of information, though many of you are aware in various capacities. As you read on, perhaps all others' will have an understanding of the whirlwind.

There have been numerous employee changes. Jim Clavadetscher resigned his position in Ennis as Madison Valley Manor Administrator in late April and has moved to the hospital to serve in another capacity. After an extensive search and eventual interview process of approximately 10 applicants, Judy Melin (pronounced Meleen), who came most recently from Livingston, accepted the position, has worked diligently with residents and staff (including hiring a new Director of Nursing, Terry Leys-Lodahl, and other key nursing positions), and has been received with open arms and much praise for her efforts. Judy's duties also included acting as interim Joint Hospital and Nursing Home Administrator for the Ruby Valley Hospital/Tobacco Roots Mountain Care Center in Sheridan, along with her Ennis duties. RVH/TRMCC Joint Administrator, Randy Cambridge, cited close family ties in Missoula as his major reason for needing to accept an Administrator's position in late May at a facility in Missoula.

Again after extensive searches and interviews of approximately 15 applicants, the position was accepted by John Semingson, who juggled his work and residency in Orofino, ID and Helena. John looks forward to employment by late September and his continued juggling act of working and living in Sheridan, refreshingly closer to his wife, who still resides and works in Helena. Both Judy Melin and John Semingson are excited about future collaborative efforts in Ennis and Sheridan, especially since the two enjoyed working together for about 3 years in their past history of administrative employment. Further, John will be an asset in maintaining the recently enhanced coordination between the RVH & TRMCC.

Frank Ford, Madison County's Contract Public Safety Communications Coordinator, has been assisting, since December in varying degrees, in Chris Mumme's transition into Director of Emergency Management. Chris has proven to be a quick study in that position and is handling his duties professionally and competently. Though Frank plans to end his communications/EMS duties in the near future, he continues with numerous responsibilities, only one of which is coordination and future implementation of Montana's Interoperability Communication System. In the meantime, Steve DiGiovanna, former firefighter and Fire Suppression Officer-Captain in San Diego County, CA, and current dispatcher for Madison County, MT, accepted the position of Communications Coordinator on a 3/4 time basis. Steve hopes to continue occasional dispatcher duties as his Communications job allows.

Temporary and permanent road crew positions were added: Steve Weddle works with the District 1 crew in Alder and Sheridan; in District 2, Jeff Hill and Calvin Young will temporarily help in Twin Bridges and Harrison, respectively; Joe Bernier is with the District 3 crew in Ennis.

Two positions which gained developer angst (though they remain thankfully patient) and some public sighs of relief (a slow-down helped some to take a collective breath) resulted from the retirement of Doris Fischer, Madison County Planner, and from Staci Beecher, Planner1, taking a city planning position in Gillett, WY. Doris's professional, positive, and steadfast handling of planning activities the last 9 years were enormously appreciated throughout Madison County and recognized throughout Northwestern United States; she is sorely missed but leaves us with our heartfelt thanks, appreciation, and encouragement to take time to "have a life." Equally, we wish Staci well in her next step of professional endeavors and miss her as well.

Regarding filling the Planning Director's position, a lengthy process was involved, including several phone interviews as well as personal interviews with prospective candidates and an initial offering in early July to a gentleman from Southern California. Salary and benefit negotiations did not meet his needs, however, so we entered the process again. We are happy to say that Charity Fechter, originally from Montana and most recently from Farmington, NM, has very recently accepted the position and will officially begin her duties in early October.

Finally, with a very distinct note of sadness but a full share of prayer from all of us, District 2 Commissioner Lewis Stahl resigned for health reasons. Lewis looks forward to getting his feet under him and traveling a bit. He asked that we share his respect and thanks to those who supported his taking the commissioner's office. Again, our payers are with Lewis and his family, as well as our thanks for his everyday try.

Yet again, 7 applicants looked forward to filling Lewis's shoes for the next year and a half, with thoughts in mind that whoever was able to do that would have to file for election in 2008. After extensive interviews and discussions, and with Lewis's initial vote of confidence, Marilyn Ross was chosen. Marilyn brings a unique and energetic perspective to this office, and we look forward to her service.

Besides those important replacements to handle, we in the office, including Laurie Buyan, Administrative Assistant, have attempted on a daily basis to address legislative issues such as stream access, wilderness, PILT and Forest Reserve Funding under the SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT, and a desire to build a high school in Big Sky, to mention a few. We've dealt with subdivisions (from Big Sky to the Ruby Valley and from the South Boulder and Norris to the Cliff & Wade Lake area), with possible wind generator activities, and look forward to an ongoing relationship with Northwestern Energy as they look to include transmission lines in a couple possible routes through the County.

Roads are also an ongoing concern. Among regular maintenance, putting mag-chloride on numerous roads to mitigate dust and to ensure road stability, and rebuilding several roads throughout the County, Hollow Contracting worked diligently on numerous paving projects in the Madison Valley most predominantly. Former Commissioner Ted Coffman deserves thanks for his work on getting these projects started.

Though all of us wish our traveled road were maintained first, most often, and the best, still we must remember the miles of roads in the County. Sincere thanks from this office are extended to all the road crews for their hard work and professional care to help keep us safe.

Those of you who have the opportunity to visit either of the two County airports may have noticed some improvements there too, such as new hangers, repaired windsocks, new weather information equipment and continued maintenance, to mention a few things.

A major concern in the near future for all of us is the bond election scheduled for October 9th for the Court House addition and Law and Justice Center in Virginia City. In this issue of the Madisonian, a schedule of public meetings is posted. With 13 such meetings scheduled throughout the County, we are hoping ample opportunity is given to view the proposal, to have questions answered, and to make an educated and informed vote. We encourage your attendance and hope you will share the dates and the information with all your voting friends. Since the last election, numerous concerns have been addressed. Besides those meetings, information has been provided on the County website (madco@madison.mt.gov).

These comments have been numerous. We will make a concerted effort to be more regular with them. Thank you all for your input, questions, concerns, advice and support.